



Lent reflection for March 11, 2024

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Mark 7:24-37

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." And when she went home, she found the child lying on the bed and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went by way of Sidon toward the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one, but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

Today's Reflection is by Heather Kelly

Reading about Jesus's miracles brings up a longing feeling in me traced right back to childhood. From a young age, I was church-going, aware of miracles, and wanting them in my life. I had a

sense that they were for things that probably were going to end in sadness and disappointment. I didn't think praying for an A on a test and then getting it was a miracle for example. But I do remember desperately praying at six years old for my beloved babysitter to come back after she had died of cancer. Now, as an adult, I understand how God was still there for me at that difficult moment, but it left me a miracles skeptic as I grew older. The miracles seemed so random and unfair. Why offer them if not to everybody?

Reading this with adult eyes gives me a new, less literal perspective thankfully, and one that doesn't leave me feeling disappointed. I was especially struck by the first miracle described by Mark. Jesus seems so relatable here: I am imagining that Jesus doesn't want to see people because he traveled and he is tired, perhaps overwhelmed. When a woman who we are made aware is different than Jesus and his followers--a gentile, of Syrophoenician origin--pleads for help for her child, his response seems dismissive and unkind, relegating her needs to the back of the line. "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Is he saying she is "other" and must wait her turn for the scraps?

What comes next is where this passage beautifully opens up for me. This mother yearning for the health of her daughter, states that there is more than enough at Jesus's table and that she wants to be there for it. She has shown up and bravely responds to Jesus and so clearly demonstrates her faith in him. And in this intimate moment we know that Jesus has seen and heard her in her pain. It is now a relationship, a back-and-forth in which this woman will receive comfort from Jesus.

The idea that there is always room at God's table is the miracle I see here. At those hard times in life when I have desperately wanted things to be different, for a miracle-like event to happen, I know that even if the outcome is a painful one, Jesus's invitation to be in relationship with him is waiting for me, and the love from that is what calms the yearning. But first, like this courageous woman, I need to show up.



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